

INSIDE

Nation: Democrats debate tax cuts, economy / D2
Community: Seniors get their own Oktoberfest / D3

Violent and dangerous school incidents

Incidents involve drugs, alcohol, assaults, fights, robbery, firearm expulsions, unlawful employee behavior and other felonies.

School	Incidents 2001-2002	Incidents 2002-2003
Ortega Middle School	99	1
Cole Middle School	154	19
Grove Middle School	109	22
Grant Middle School	111	52
Hill Middle School	151	22
Kepler Middle School	208	33
Martin Luther King Middle School	358	29
Merrill Middle School	168	29
Morley Middle School	134	26
P.S. 1 Charter	53	8
Henry Middle School	136	33
Carmel Middle School	108	11
Lake Co. Intermediate School	116	9
Ignacia Intermediate School	50	7
Ignacio Junior High School	47	13
Sterling Middle School	93	3
Baker Central School	94	3
Monte Vista Middle School	54	2
Cripple Creek-Victor Jr.-Sr.	65	2
North Valley Middle School	55	0

Source: Colorado State Board of Education

Times-Clear graphic

REGION

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School violence down

Musgrave warns states may not be reporting as often

By Kevin Darst

The Daily Times-Clear

Within a year, North Valley Middle School in LaSalle went from 55 reported fights to zero.

In danger of landing on the "persistently dangerous" schools list after the 2001-2002 school year, North Valley made a turnaround during the 2002-2003 year similar to the state's other 19 schools in the same position.

Fights on campus seemingly disappeared. Alcohol and drug violations vanished.

If the school landed on the list — made up of schools that consistently have a high number of violent and dangerous incidents — North Valley would have been forced to notify parents and give them the option of sending their children elsewhere in the Weld RE-1 district.

The difference between the two years was not a new anti-violence program or a crackdown on drugs and alcohol. North Valley already had a "zero tolerance" policy for drugs and alcohol, and state statute mandates automatic expulsion for any student caught with a weapon on campus.

The difference, Weld RE-1 Superintendent Jo Barbie said, was a clarification by the state of what constituted violations, as

well as the exit of a principal who reported "every little push and shove as an assault."

"I believe what you see this year is an accurate portrayal of North Valley," Barbie said. "We're not protecting our school from this label."

But Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, a Republican who represents Colorado's 4th Congressional District, said Thursday that states are being too lenient with their requirements for reporting dangerous incidents mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act and that parents aren't getting an accurate picture of their child's school environment.

"It's ridiculous to have a definition that says there are no persistently dangerous schools," Musgrave said, adding that some adults wouldn't "tolerate" the violent condi-

■ See SCHOOLS / D2

DAILY TIMES-CLEAR

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2003

Section D

SCHOOLS: No district school on list

Continued from D1

tions of some of the state's schools.

Musgrave and Rep. Tom Osborne, R-Neb., will host a hearing 10 a.m. Monday at the Old Senate Chamber of the state capital in Denver to examine the state's reporting requirements. The pair will be joined by state Senate President and Republican John Andrews and Colorado Commissioner of Education William Maloney, as well as Musgrave's predecessor, Bob Schaffer.

Of the nation's 91,000 public schools, 52 were labeled persistently dangerous by their states, according to The Associated Press. In 2000, the last year for which government statistics were available, there were nearly 700,000 violent crimes in America's schools.

Schools in the St. Vrain School District did not have enough reported dangerous incidents in 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 to be on the possible list.

"I'm not blaming the schools," Musgrave said. "But parents absolutely need this information."

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, each state sets its own definitions and criteria for reporting and acceptable violation levels. In Colorado, schools that report 45 or more dangerous incidents per 300 students per year exceed the safety standard.

Schools that exceed the limit two years in a row

are required to notify parents, who can choose to send their child to another "safe" school in the district, including a charter school.

After 2001-2002, the first year of reporting, 20 Colorado schools, including North Valley, made the list of "possible" persistently dangerous schools.

That's when the state clarified the definition of assault to mean incidents that would be considered felony first- or second-degree assault under state statutes.

Following the new definitions, none of the original 20 schools in the "possible" category exceeded the state-set limit for the 2002-2003 school year, according to the Colorado Department of Education.

Musgrave insisted she doesn't think every push and shove should be reported.

But she said the current system doesn't capture the environment of Colorado's schools.

Barbie said that when it comes to fights at school, the need for police should be the "barometer" for a reportable incident.

"If it's an assault under Colorado law, why isn't law enforcement called and charges filed?" she said. "None of my schools are violent schools. They're safe schools. Seldom do we deal with incidents that would be ruled assault."

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